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ABSTRACT

This paper describes mobile library services in Thailand. Mobile library is defined as traveling or movable library activities in any format that visit rural districts or remote areas, where there is no other library service, on a specific schedule. Following an introductory section that addresses justification for and types of mobile libraries, several examples of mobile libraries in Thailand are presented. These include the Mobile Train Library, Mobile Bus Library, and Mobile Floating Library operated by the Informal Education Promotion Center, Department of Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Education, as well as bookmobiles operated by universities and library schools. (MES)

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Reaching out through a mobile library

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Paper

1. Introduction

Educated manpower is one of the most crucial needs of any country. In developing countries where there is frequently a shortage of physical, and skilled manpower may be even more crucial. Thailand has emphasized manpower development from the First National Plan. To date the Development Plans have not been very successful because Thailand still face poverty, ill health, and literacy problems of its population.

Due to the fact that the majority of its population, over 85%, is living in rural areas, the main occupation of the rural people is agriculture, and the average income of these people is still very low. The experts have pinpointed that illiteracy is one of primary causes of these problems especially in rural and low economic communities.

In order to increase the living standards of the rural dwellers, the government of Thailand has as its goals, the promotion of education, and the eradication of illiteracy. Information is considered a means to solve the mentioned problems. To fulfill the goals, various organizations and agencies are responsible for carrying out the Thai government policy. There are the Department of Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Education; the Community Development

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Department, Ministry of Interior, The National Security Command, Ministry of Defense; and some universities and private organizations. Among these, the Department of Non-formal Education takes a leading role.

2. Mobile libraries

2.1 Clarification

The term "mobile library" may be considered as all travelling or movable library activities in any formats such as large enclosed trucks or vans or large motor vehicles equipped with shelves and a staff enclosure to visit rural districts or remote areas where there is no other library service at specific times on a certain day or days of the week. The libraries may choose their books from the shelves to extend to villages, and isolates farms and houses.

2.2 Justification

Librarianship is a profession that is associated with service, it is the moral and ethical ramifications of this service that make a profession not just a career but a calling, a calling to social responsibility. At present, all libraries are showing a good deal of interest in social responsibility. They become active in adult literacy at local and national levels. They share their resources and services to support education and lifelong learning particularly in productive training for citizenship; to help people make intelligent decisions and lead to more enlightened lives.

The concern for a quality society is another major issue of the day. More and more people are becoming actively involved with the problems. The concept of public education for every citizen leads to inexorably to the democratization of education and direct responses to community needs.

So most libraries are taking an additional role to reach all those who are not normal library patrons, to build socially oriented information systems, and to provide challenging materials. Mobile libraries become a means of this role.

2.3 Types of a mobile library

There are various forms of mobile libraries in Thailand depending on the circumstances of the sites to be served. A horse-cart, engine boats, motorcycles, or book vans and the like have been used to carry books, reading materials, and audio-visual materials in packages, boxes, or bags to schools, factories, hospitals, hotels, temples, train stations, and the village reading centers.

The following are examples of mobile libraries operated in Thailand especially those operated by the Department of Non-formal Education. Some are from other institutions such as universities and library schools.

Mobile Train Library

Responsible Agency
Informal Education Promotion Center, Department of Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Education

Background

The Ministry of Education in the present Government has concrete policy to develop education in such a way that learns has virtue and ability to learn through their whole lives in a happy manner by themselves. This viewpoint is consistent with the principle of the 1997 Constitution of the Thai Kingdom which is regarded as a step to significant educational re-engineering of our country.

Since quite a number of Thai people still lack educational opportunities to attend formal schooling systems even though the government sectors have made a lot of efforts to conduct education programs in various ways to all people throughout the country as much as they can. However, it is unlikely for self-learning access of people in remote areas even if they are eager to learn. In addition, we can not deny that most Thai people still lack reading habits. That is - they have neither been encouraged nor trained to read and search for knowledge by themselves since childhood. All of these factors inevitably obstruct their learning development to ultimate goals, resulting in solving national problems like economic crisis which our country is confronting with.

It is necessary to develop the models of service on reading promotion, obtaining information and self-learning of people in various methods suitable to the target groups. Available resources must be utilized in an uttermost way for people are learning. The mobile train library is then considered another model of informal education activity which can considerably respond to the above mentioned intentions.

Objectives

1. To expand learning opportunities and create reading habits of people of all walks of life thoroughly.

2. To promote people to spend their time during the train trips in a useful, and enjoyable manner by reading various kinds of books in the train library.

3. To originate a new learning model which creates proper atmospheres and surroundings responding to the needs of target groups.

Target Groups

1. Commuters of Railway Authority of Thailand at platforms and on the trains

2. Children, pupils, students and people settled nearby railway stations or junctions where train compartments can be parked for giving services.

Type of Services

1. **Open libraries**: They are organized for train commuters at platforms. At the beginning about 5-10 open libraries will be established as a pilot project with the cooperation between provincial or district non-formal education centers and target railway stations. Activities undertaken in the Open libraries are as follows.

    I. Provide commuters with books and other kinds of printed materials donated and supported by various organizations such as Office of the Narcotics Control Board, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative and Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

II. Set up information bulletin boards or exhibitions on issues relating with target groups. Examples are health, labor laws, culture, traditions or vocational guidance, etc.

III. Present broadcasting or video programs on education and entertainment.

IV. Demonstrate entrepreneurial courses or interest group markets at the prime time.

V. Organize groups discussing issues they are interested in such as dangers in cities, job applications, etc.

VI. Conduct other appropriate activities.

2. **Book shelves**: The Railway State Authority of Thailand has designed, built and installed book shelves on the racks of ordinary and rapid train compartments. The Department of Non-Formal Education will invite private sectors to provide donated books for the RSAT. At the beginning, this project will be launched at 3 routes, namely the south, north and northeast.

3. **Mobile train libraries**: Unused train compartments but still in good condition are decorated as mobile libraries and learning centers that resemble library vans. There are various learning activities available in the compartments such as books, audio-visual aids, exhibitions, learning groups, and reading promotion activities. At the beginning, two mobile train libraries will be launched in the northern and northeastern routes.

   Each mobile train library compartment connected with a large train is parked at a target railway station to serve people living along both sides of the rails for 1-2 days. Then it will keep on moving to next railway station until it returns to the same route. There will be 2 volunteer teachers (temporary employees) on duty for each time with the cooperation and support from the provincial and district non-formal education centers in the vicinity.

Project Duration
Since September 1999

Concerned Organizations

1. Railway State Authority of Thailand
2. Foundations
3. Private sectors

Expected Outcomes

1. Children and youths as well as train commuters will spend their leisure during the train trips in a beneficial manner.

2. Mobile train libraries' target groups will have more reading habits.

3. Mobile train libraries' target groups will apply knowledge gained from reading as a fundamental to analyze various matters more reasonably.

Mobile Bus Library

Background

As we have already known that the main purpose of the Department of Non-Formal Education is to promote formal schooling system and provide non-formal and informal education. Informal Education Promotion Center is a DNFE's division that conducts various kinds of informal education activities for people of all walks of life. This also includes mobile bus libraries that play a major role to create and develop learning skills to children, youths and public. They provide numerous types of learning materials such as printed, artificial, and exhibition materials, textbooks, non-formal education learning packages and electronic materials to community people particularly to those living in slum areas and to less developed communities in Bangkok. Moreover, the mobile bus libraries ran assist people to keep pace with today's necessarily fundamental knowledge. This includes family education, health, democracy, environmental education, daily life basic laws and entertainment news. Several types of learning activities are organized in the mobile bus libraries as well.

Objectives

1. To organize learning activities and encourage children, youths and general public to acquire their knowledge from various types of learning materials.

2. To upgrade the quality of life of the disadvantaged children, youths and people in slum areas, in small enterprises and in construction sites within Bangkok.

Implementation

1. Seek a distribution from the Bangkok Mass Transit Authority for 3 good conditioned- commuter buses which are not in used now.

2. Repair the buses by painting and redecorating them in such a way that they can be used as a learning center with learning atmosphere by sticking mottoes about reading promotion and creation of reading habits.

3. Provide the Public with printed and electronics learning materials by getting financial support from the government budget and initiate books and learning materials donation program to receive distribution from general people, firms, private sectors and publishing houses for giving service in the mobile bus libraries.

4. Cooperate with private sectors, companies, general people and as well as those who would like to have participation in promoting and supporting reading habits of children, youths and people to donate educational equipment including bookshelves, television sets, video, and audio tape recorders, computers, etc.

5. Supply teaching and learning materials for decorating each of the five commuter-buses suitably with its specific target groups as follows :

   Buses No.1-2 are decorated for serving children, youths and general public living in slum areas, in construction sites and in other foundations.

   Materials and activities

1. Printed materials: These include books served for specific target groups such as books creating intelligence and various skills to children, cartoons, books about drugs, literatures. Translated stories, texts on occupations, family education, handicrafts, recipes, etc. Mobile library members can borrow all of these printed materials to read at home.

2. Electronics materials: These consist of video presentation on general documentaries about drugs, AIDS, and occupations while the Thaicom satellite programs suitable to the specific target group present games increasing children's and youths' intelligence on English, Thai and mathematics.

3. Educational toys: These are games, jigsaws, storytelling games and puppets.

4. Exhibitions on AIDS, drugs, election, occupations, etc.

5. Giving guidance services on education and occupations.

Buses No.3-4 are decorated for serving non-formal education learners at their group meeting places e.g. schools, temples, firms, enterprises, etc.

Materials and activities

1. Printed materials: These include books served for specific target groups such as non-formal education learning packages, supplementary books of various subjects, books for entertainment, e.g. short stories, fictions, translated stories, books about occupations, democracy, family education and public health.

2. Electronics materials: These include learning materials from CAI package which enable learners to test their own knowledge by themselves and video programs presenting various subjects at all levels.

3. Exhibitions on AIDS, drugs, elections, occupations, etc. Sometimes there will be resource persons to give specific knowledge.

4. Giving guidance services on further studies and occupations.

Bus No 5 is decorated for serving general public in parks.

Materials and activities

1. Printed materials: These are books about health, exercise, meditation, diet selection, sports, how to spend free time usefully and books concerning academics and entertainment.

2. Movable materials used for exercise: These are drumbeats, rubber loops, badminton, chess, etc.

3. Electronics materials: These are video programs on various kinds and ways of exercises.

4. Invite resource persons from Ministry of Health to give lectures and display exhibitions to NFE personnel on proper ways of

getting exercises, and taking care of one's health.

Mobile Floating Library

Responsible Agency
Informal Education Promotion Center, Department of Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Education, Thailand

Background
Informal education plays a crucial role for life long education promotion. However, all activities carried out by the government have recently not been distinctively fruitful because learners are not yet encouraged to develop and practice learning by themselves which is regarded as the core of education. Hence, we must encourage learners to learn practical tennis by letting them assimilate their knowledge with real life situations. This will assist learners to find out proper ways to learn by themselves, analyze and understand problems they confront and get in touch from direct experiences generating new mode of learning.

Mobile floating libraries can provide learning activities for people living on both river banks with numerous types of learning materials available in the mobile floating libraries such as books, video tapes, computers, exhibitions, etc. They can also learn from direct experiences by contacting with real situations that take place in main rivers such as the Chao Phraya. This makes learners have common sense towards environment conservation, love and be proud of the civilization of the rivers influencing upon their lives and eagerly take part in the conservation and rehabilitation of watery natural resources and environments, which is consistent with the 1997 Constitution of Thai Kingdom, Articles 56 and 69 that state as follows:

> "...Individuals are entitled to participate in the government policy and their communities to observe natural resources and environments and utilize the natural resources for their living happily and continuously..."

Objectives

1. Expand services on reading promotion activities and learning from various types of materials to people living nearby rivers to use services conveniently and thoroughly.

2. Conduct learning experiences from real life situations concerning the civilization of rivers and watery environments to people of all walks of life in order to make them aware of imminent problems and take part in the conservation of natural resources.

Quantitative Goals

1. Learning materials and curriculum
   I. Provide at least 5,000 books for circulation in each mobile boat library
   II. Set up at least 100 tapes of video programs and other supplementary learning materials suitable with learners' needs and interests.
   III. Conduct teaching and learning curriculum or training at least on three topics of the followings:
      a. The civilization of waters
      b. Problems of watery environments

c. Conservation of watery resources
d. Environmental conservation volunteers
e. Guides and river tours

2. Target groups
   I. Pupils, students and general public
   II. People living nearby the Chao Phraya River and others
   III. Underprivileged children and youths at least 20,000 people are served annually.

3. Services
   I. Giving services at least 5 days a week.
   II. Lending members books and other reading materials.
   III. Providing education or training programs of various curriculum.

Qualitative Goals

1. Target groups settled down along or beyond the Choa Phraya river areas and others in remote areas will have more opportunity to access services from the mobile floating library in a suitable manner.

2. The learning model of watery civilization and resource conservation will be developed to an effective learning process resulting in real practice.

Models of Services

1. Mobile floating library: It is served as a general public library where its users can read, apply for library membership and borrow books to read outside the library for 7-21 days. The mobile floating library provides library services for people in the boat and on the lands at some appropriate places such as temples, community areas, etc.

2. It is conducted as a floating classroom for a short course of 4-6 hours, where 40-100 earners can be served at a time with teaching and learning activities or trainings according to various curricula. There will be evaluation and presentation of diplomas or certificates.

Project Implementation

1. Preparation
   I. Repair and decorate three boats, namely Nang Noppamas, Naval Transportation Department's boat No1215 and Maharaj in such a way that they are in good condition and ready to give services.
   II. Provide learning materials as targeted.
   III. Develop learning and teaching syllabuses or training courses.
   IV. Prepare a dock for parking mobile floating libraries where activities and services can be carried out suitably for the target groups.
   V. Set up competent personnel to run the project comprising academics, resource persons, trainers, audio-visual staffs, library officials, mechanics and sailors.

2. Implementation
   I. Disseminate mobile floating library activities.
   II. Cooperate with governmental, private and business sectors for seeking help and financial support for the project.
   III. Coordinate a work-plan with other sectors such as educational institutions, private organizations, temples and communities for

planning service schedules.
IV. Implement the work-plan.

3. Evaluation
   I. Write down a daily report and make a weekly report about implementation results in order to conclude a monthly service report.
   II. Conduct an evaluation of the implementation every 4 months.
   III. Make a conclusion and evaluate the project annually.

Related Agencies

1. Royal Thai Navy Force
2. Social and Economic Policies Institute
3. National Library
4. Governmental, private and business organizations and foundations

Budget Allocation

1. Budget allocation for public libraries and learning networks
   I. Repair cost for 3 boats
   II. Reading materials cost
   III. Implementation cost
2. Supplementary budget support from foundations and private sectors for equipment and boat decorations

Expected Outcomes

1. People settled down along the Chao Phraya River will have a reading habit and be fond of learning by themselves increasingly.
2. The DNFE will obtain an appropriate mode of foaming activities concerning wat civilization and resource conservation.
3. Public networks for natural resource conservation will be created concretely.

2.4 Book Mobiles Operated by Universities and library schools

There are quite a few numbers of projects known as community information services offered by the university. The main reason to offer the services is due to the mission of the university. One mission of all universities in Thailand is to provide their services to the community. They consider that people living in the community are taxpayers who deserve supports from the universities as well. So university libraries carry out the university mission by extending their services to the community through mobile libraries..

Following are mobile libraries projects operated by the university and library schools.

Mobile Library Services for the Hill Tribe Community Project offered by the Chiang Mai University Library.

This project aims to assist the hill tribe in speaking, reading and writing Thai language which would help them toward better understanding and good attitude on Thai national identity as we as to upgrade their living standard. The Central Library operates the mobile library service to 2 destinations at Doi Inthanon and Doi Angkang once a week. The activities include reading promotion, story

telling, puppet show, slide show, movie show, and games.

Book Mobile Project offered by the Department of Library and Information, Chiang Mai University.

This project provides reading materials and reading promotion activities to primary schools in Chiang Mai district and well as other surrounding districts such as Mae Rim, Mae Taeng, Chiang Dao, San Kampaeng, and Hang Dong. This projected started in 1989.

Book Mobile Program offered by the Department of Library and Information Science, Khon Kaen University

The program has been carried out for more than 15 years with the aims to promote reading habits and to provide reading materials to rural children in the Northeastern Thailand.

The Portable Libraries Project by the Department of Library and Information Science, Srinakharinwirot University Prasarnmitr

This project aims to provide young people in rural areas of Thailand, who have virtually no access to books, with information and interesting reading materials. The Portable Library consists of a compact book box, which is used for transportation, as a display shelf and storage container. About 100 books can be packed in a box. A brief guide on how to use the books and the box is provided together with an evaluation sheet. The books and boxes are funded by donation from individuals and organizations.

Book for Children - Project offered by Srinakharinwirot University in Bangkok

This project has as its goals the selection and distribution of recreation books of quality to libraries in rural communities and schools lacking in financial support. The project activities and programs are developed in cooperation with local groups, such as educational institutions, associations and charity groups. The "Children's Literature Show Case" was launched to be a companion project to the Books for Children Project. The activities include a display of children books from various publishing houses sales of books at reduced prices, and reading promotion activity.

The Traveling Exhibition of Books for Young Readers: an outreach activity conducted by the Central Library, Srinakarinwirot University, Bangkok

The Central Library, being a member of the UNESCO Network of Associated Libraries (UNAL),initiated this outreach service. Books on international understanding, peace, environment and other world concerns are displayed, story-told, dramatized and offered for wide reading to children in the rural areas. Books are displayed in pockets (similar to shoe-bag racks). The pockets are made of cloth or fertilizer bags in different sizes and can be folded to a hand-carry size. They are light but strong and flexible for displays in various settings-hung along walls, corridor, fences and between trees. A 2x2 meter rack can display 100-150 books and twice the number when both sides are used. Workshops are arranged for teachers, librarians and volunteers on how to make books come alive. A set of books contained in the Traveling Exhibition is left with the school for use in the library or for rotating among several school libraries.

Knowledge for Kids Project offered by the Office of Documentation and Information, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU)

The project has been run since 1987 by the Office of Documentation and Information to promote reading habits among children. At the beginning, selected children books were purchased and distributed to the primary schools within the University's neighborhood. Later, the project was further developed. More books are funded and donated by STOU staff members. Today, portable boxes containing selected books and games are left with and rotated among different schools. Most of them are schools where students lack reading opportunities such as disadvantage children and orphan schools and primary schools in remote rural areas. The project has proved to be popular with the children.

Information to Rural Children offered by the Academic Resource Center and the Department of Library and Information Science, Mahasarakhaam University

The Academic Resource Center in cooperation with The Department of LIS has organized a mobile library service for children and youths in rural areas. This project started in 1981 as a Summer Program for Children, and as Toward Rural Children in 1985. At present, this project extends its services to all age groups in rural communities in Northeastern Thailand. The main purposes of project are:

- to ensure permanent literacy among primary school pupils and semi-literate adults
- to promote reading habits among children and adults in the rural communities to increase the quality of life
- to provide access to information and technology which are relevant and useful to rural living
- to increase children's and adults' appreciation of local cultural identities
- to increase the spirit of community living and cooperation among children and adults

Contents and Activities
Acaptivities are divided into 2 sessions. The morning session is divided into groups of individual subjects, the afternoon session deals with general activities such as songs and games, demonstration, and puppet shows.

The following is a list of subject areas covered by each group.

Group 1 : Literature
Examples of activities were 1) story telling utilizing pictures, children's books and ropes, 2) story telling competition by school children in the targeted clusters, 3) circulation of children and easy books.

Group2 : Geography
Examples of activities were 1, "Soi-dao" (Word rearranged from cut-outs): 2) telling stories related to geography, travel, forestry and natural resources: 3) map reading: 4) display of various means of transportation: 5) sentence-forming games and songs.

Group 3 : Democracy
Examples of activities were 1) puppet show entitled "Living Together in A Democracy Society": 2) story telling with puppetry and children's books: 3) answering question from books: role-playing for children and adults using themes related to democracy: 5) singing contests using songs related to

democracy: 6) displays of knowledge and information on democracy.

Group 4 : History
Examples of activities were 1) story telling: 2) picture-connecting games requiring participants to read information on the back of each picture: 3) singing related to history using handouts: 4) painting and coloring pictures of important historical figures: 5) picture-guessing games using portraits of historical figures and cultural scenes: 6) exhibition and displays depicting Isan traditions.

Group 5 : Mathematics
Examples of activities were 1) arithmetic songs using either a tape recorder or handouts; 2) mathematics games such as little tiger's adventure, mysterious circles. Money card connecting, picture connecting, basic number counting practice: 3) math quizzes; 4) mathematical instrument displays.

Group 6 : Language
Examples of activities were 1) games: 2) word rhyme connecting: 3) synonym connecting: synonym matching: 5) word guessing games using picture puzzles: 6) action singing: 7) "What's the Missing Letter?" : a word game: 8) distribution of Children's books for later story sharing.

Group 7 : Home-economics
Examples of activities were 1) a demonstration on how to make soybean milk; 2)a demonstration on how to make drink form Takrai (lemon grass); 3) hints and suggestions on how to preserve food.

Group 8 : Audio-visual Materials and Equipment
Examples of activities were 1) preview a cartoon movie entitled "Superman IV" with scripts: slides on the development of various types of technology: 3) games: 4) quizzes on information technologies: 5) exhibition on technologies with written explanations: 6) reading instructions how to use household appliance.

Group 9 : Music
Examples of activities were 1) display of pictures and information on musical instruments: reading about various types of music: 3) playing Isan musical instruments: Ponglang, Kan, etc: singing competition: 5) distribution of reading materials on music and musical instruments for later question-anwere activities.

Group 10 : Arts
Examples of activities were 1) exhibition on printing from natural materials and making handicrafts from used materials; 2) story re-telling of "The Joy of Learning" and "Uncle Teng"; 3) circulation of books on arts; 4) practicing on "Creative Ideas for Handicraft Making" using vegetables and fruits; 5) drawing and coloring pictures; 6) Japanese paper folding (Origami) following the instructions.

Group 11 : Songs and Games
Examples of activities were 1) word games; 2) question-answer games based on information from books distributed; 3) Mon-Son-Pa Game (An Isan Hide and Seek Game); 4) The Acid Sea Game; 5) the Horseback Riding Game; 6) the Rafting Game; 7) the Commander Game; 8) Pantomime based on songs.

Group 12 : Buddhism
Examples of activities were 1) re-arranging words to make religious proverbs; 2) riddles on Isan tradition; 3) quizzes on Buddhism (participants with correct answers to at least ten questions will be rewarded with jackpot throwing; 4) singing along with provided scripts; 5) drawing pictures on various aspects of Buddhism from imagination with complete descriptions.

Base 13 : Health and Personal Hygiene
Examples of activities were 1) quizzes on health information; 2) games; 3) exhibition on health cares; 4) exhibition on appropriate tooth brushing; 5) distribution of information on groups of main food and exercises.

Group 14 : Puppetry
Examples of activities were 1) story telling using puppets; 2) demonstration on how to make easy puppets; 3) displays of various types of puppets in stories for children; 4) story telling practice using puppets made; 5) songs and games using puppets.

Group 15 : The Information for Community
Examples of activities were 1) Exhibition and distribution of know-how information on agriculture, family planning, health care, etc.; 2) songs and games; 3) demonstration how to make coconut-coated peanut.

Please note that 1) most activities in each group places special emphasis on reading, that is children books, scripts, handouts, instructions, and other reading materials are distributed to the participants prior performing each activity; 2) the participants are allowed to attend activities as they like.

Following the morning session, all participants enjoy activities performed on the central stage. The activities include folk music and dances performed by students from the university and from the local schools, demonstration of concerned topics, singing contest, competition of stories retold from books distributed, competition of general knowledge among school children in the school cluster. At the end of each trip, an evaluation is made.

3. Conclusion

Mobile libraries are operated by various organizations in various forms. No matter what they are, the main purpose is similar, that is to reach out those who have less opportunity to access to information and regular services offered in the library. It is the social responsibility role of most libraries and organizations concerned.

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